

Testimony before the Appropriations Committee

February 23, 2017

Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS)

**Governor's H.B. 7027 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE
BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2019, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS
THEREFORE**

Good afternoon Senator Osten and Senator Formica, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Kevin Vary and I am a registered voter in Norwich.

I am here to testify against cuts in the proposed budget for the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. I am one of the many faces of mental health and addiction in this state as I have struggled with both my whole life. I am also here to express my strong support for non-profit organizations, such as Reliance Health, that receive the state funds you want to cut. These organizations give me and those like me the choices for programs and services that are very important to my life and my recovery.

I am 56 years old and I have been a member of Reliance Health since 1983 when it was called Reliance House. After high school, I started working as a bus boy cleaning tables and then worked as a custodian at a church and then at a school. I worked for 6 years full-time at this job but had to leave because of my mental health condition and substance use issues. I have tried other jobs since then but have had to leave them all for the same reasons. Over the years I have been given a lot of help by Reliance Health to get back on my feet and be a productive member of society. Today, because of the help I have received through these programs, I live on my own and am in my 19th year of sobriety.

The cuts you want to make to the budget would really make it hard for Reliance Health and others places like it to continue to provide the services and programs to people with serious mental health conditions. I know that without these programs and services in my life, I am not sure what my life would look like or where I would be. I would tell you that it would definitely not be better and I would probably be dead.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak and share my experience with you.